



**Minutes
King County Rural Forest Commission
September 13, 2006
Preston Community Center**

Commissioners present: Alex Kamola (Chair), Doug McClelland, Doug Schindler; Leonard Guss and Lee Witter Kahn.

Commissioners absent: Julie Stangell (Vice Chair), Dennis Dart, Jim Franzel and Ole Una.

Ex officio member absent: Marilyn Cope, Amy Grotta and Randy Sandin.

Staff: Kathy Creahan, Farm and Forest Programs Manager; Kristi McClelland, Forester; Linda Vane, Rural Forest Commission Liaison, and Bill Eckel, Section Manager of the Office of Rural and Resource Programs.

Guests: Pat Traub, Enumclaw Forested Foothills Recreation Area (EFFRA); DeeAnn Hansen, small forest landowner; Ron Baum, Hollywood Hills Association, Sammamish Grange, and Woodinville Artists Association; Kevin Buckley, Snoqualmie Tribe Environmental Protection Manager; Wade Holden, Friends of the Trail (arrived later); and Monica Walker, King County Noxious Weed Control Program (arrived later).

Alex Kamola called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Meeting Summary

Action Items:

1. Doug McClelland and Alex Kamola represent the Rural Forest Commission in a presentation at a Town Hall Meeting on September 25, 2006, in Carnation.
2. Linda Vane will invite the Cascade Land Conservancy to make a presentation regarding the 'Cascade Agenda' and rural economic development strategies.
3. Linda will work with the Agriculture Commission to draft an agenda for the joint meeting on November 9th and will circulate it to RFC members for input.

Motions:

Motion 1-09-06 That the minutes from the July 12, 2006 meeting be approved with the change that the line "this would bring the price for the permit into line with the cost of a forest practice permit" be struck and the name Charlie Perleberg on page 6 be corrected to read Andy Perleberg. Len moved, Lee seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Public Comment

Pat Traub of the Enumclaw Forested Foothills Recreation Area (EFFRA) introduced her organization as a grassroots effort to conserve 10,000 forested acres in the Enumclaw foothills

for recreational uses such as horseback riding, biking, hiking and birdwatching. Horseback riders and others now use a network of traditional equestrian trails on public and private forest lands in the Cascade foothills. Pat said that EFFRA is concerned that subdivision of large parcels into smaller properties and development threaten these traditional trail uses. Pat explained that as a first step in preserving the trail network, EFFRA volunteers are using GPS units to map the trails. She also said that they have asked King County to consider adding the traditional riding trails to the equine areas defined in the County's Comprehensive Plan. Then if the land is sold it is more likely that the conductivity of the trails will be preserved, according to Pat. EFFRA believes that long term preservation of the trails may require purchase of easements across private properties or outright purchase of land and they are engaged in discussions with the Cascade Land Conservancy. Pat said that EFFRA also hopes to establish support services like equine 911 in case of wildfire.

Staff Reports

Kathy Creahan

Code Changes Update

Kathy reported on code changes proposed by the County's Office of Business Relations and Economic Development (BRED) in connection with the *Rural Economic Strategies*. Kathy said that most of the proposed code changes have to do with increasing flexibility in rural and home industries. Included in the package is a proposal to allow forest thinning in sensitive areas and on steep slopes when conducted in compliance with a state forest practice permit as part of a Conversion Option Harvest Plan (COHP). This is one of two forestry code changes that the RFC endorsed in an August letter to BRED (see Appendix A).

Kathy reminded the group that the second code change that the RFC recommended involved reducing the fee for staff work on forest practice-related permits on small properties to a maximum of \$402.50. Kathy has been told that the Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) will include this second proposed change in a package of fee adjustments that they will submit to the County Council at a later date.

Kathy encouraged RFC members to review the proposed code change thoroughly and to communicate any additional comments to the County Council or her. The full text of the changes is available on the web site at <http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/bred/business/Projects/Rural.htm>.

Linda Vane

Reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act

Linda provided an update on the status of the federal Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, which is due to expire this year. Federal funds directed to King County under the Act help pay for several forest-related programs, rural schools and roads. At their May 10th meeting the RFC recommended that King County express support for reauthorization and full funding of the Act. In response, the County Council passed a motion in

support of reauthorization and Executive Sims sent a letter in support of reauthorization to each member of Washington State's congressional delegation, according to Linda. She said that it is likely that the Act will be reauthorized for the coming year and Congress will consider a further extension.

Taylor Mountain Harvest

Linda reported that the Taylor Mountain timber harvest is 60% complete. With fire danger being high, operations have been suspended for the time being.

Town Hall Meeting

Linda said that after approving a plan for improving communications with the County Council in May 2006, the RFC had proposed at Town Hall Meeting on forestry to the Council. As a result, the RFC has been invited to make a short presentation at a Town Hall Meeting on Rural Issues in Carnation on September 25. The audience will be local mayors and rural residents, according to Linda. After some discussion, the RFC consensus was to focus the presentation on past Council actions that have benefited forestry and forests, changes in forest practice code recommended by the RFC and near term challenges for an economically viable forestry and preserving forestland.

Action: Doug M and Alex volunteered to make the presentation.

Kristi McClelland

King Conservation District and Cascade Land Conservancy workshop

Kristi reported that she and Alex Kamola attended a workshop on the Cascade Land Conservancy's (CLC) 'Cascade Agenda' co-hosted by the King Conservation District. The purpose of the meeting was to engage conservation districts and other interested groups in planning for implementation of the CLC plan. Kristi said that the meeting was beneficial because it involved some smaller groups who had not yet participated in efforts to keep agriculture and forest lands functioning. Alex said that there was a lot of give and take among the people there. He had the sense that there was a lot of support for working together, even among individuals who disagree strongly on issues like land use regulation.

Doug Schindler said that by pulling together many people the CLC has created a vision, which they now have to implement. They cannot do alone, he added. Doug S. said there is broad agreement that preserving forest land is a good thing. The details about how to accomplish that have yet to be worked out. Doug S. asked if the RFC might want to contribute to this, perhaps by making recommendations to the County about what needs to be done. For example, what does the RFC think are the critical parcels to protect?

Len proposed that the thought of continuing working forests in King County is highly dubious. If a working forest is one where the products are used somewhere, then there is a cognitive dissonance between trying to grow trees - and the uses of them. Len said that there are virtually no applications for forests in King County. For example, there is no sawmill in the county although we have 300,000-plus acres of trees. Len said that the only thing we can do with our trees is export them to somewhere else and those places are becoming fewer and fewer in

number. The County should guard against actions that have unintended negative consequences for forestry operations, said Len. He added that we need to bear in mind that continuing forestry is easy; working forests is an economically losing proposition unless something is done on the other end.

Doug M. suggested that the County cannot control mill closures, but they perhaps could encourage forest products manufacturing by ensuring high quality rail corridors to allow efficient transport of goods. He proposed that the RFC approach CLC and ask them to present their ideas on rural economic development. Kathy added that the focus over the last couple of decades has been preserving the land base. She agreed it could be valuable to explore other ways to encourage other aspects of wood use, in other words look on a larger scale and not only focus on incentives for small land owners, but examine the bigger picture of a working forest economy.

Action: Linda will invite the Cascade Land Conservancy to make a presentation to the RFC.

Resource Advisory Council Grants under Title II of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000

Kathy Creahan, King County Forestry Program and
Doug Schindler, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

Kathy provided information on King County's allocation of funds between Title II and Title III, respectively, of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Act). Eighty percent of the funds received by King County from the Forest Service under the Act go to rural schools and roads, while twenty percent is used for forest-related activities under Title II and III. Title II projects take place on federal land or otherwise benefit federal forest lands. Kathy said that eligible projects under Title III may include activities such as the purchase of conservation easements, youth forestry education, search and rescue and wildfire safety planning. King County has elected to allocate about 2% of funds received under the Act to Title II, according to Kathy. Typically this is about \$40,000 a year for projects in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest such as trail signage, watershed education, noxious weed removal, habitat restoration and rehabilitation of natural sites that have been overused. Kathy said these are not extra things, but are essential maintenance that the Forest Service does not have the budget to do.

Kathy said that the federal statute calls for a Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) to serve as an advisory group in awarding grants under Title II. Doug Schindler is a volunteer on the RAC and explained that the grants leverage match which greatly expands the benefits of the program. The funds disbursed by the Forest Service under Title II are commonly known as RAC grants.

Kathy introduced Monica Walker, King County Noxious Weed Control Program staff and project manager for the Skykomish River South Fork Knotweed Control Project, which is funded by an RAC grant. Monica explained that knotweed is an invasive weed that damages fish and wildlife habitat by creating a monoculture on riverbanks. She said that the RAC grants are important because funds for knotweed control are very limited and even with the grant her

project was able to control knotweed on only a limited number of river miles. Doug S. said that knotweed spreads downstream so it is critical to control it at the river headwaters. Doug M. commented that the Forest Service would not be likely to control knotweed without these grants.

Wade Holden, Executive Director of Friends of the Trail, spoke next. He said that his group removes trash from the trails in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and many other public lands such as Washington DNR and King County properties. The RAC funding is important because although the Forest Service has always been the agency with the largest share of the work, they have the least amount of resources to contribute to the clean up effort. Wade said that when the Friends of the Trail started ten years ago they knew every landowner would have to participate in order for the effort to be successful. Wade said they have always having to find supplemental funding to fill in for the federal share. The RAC funding does not cover the entire cost but shows good faith, said Wade. He added that the amount of garbage is huge. It is not beer bottles at campgrounds, a lot of it is large, even things like 40-foot trailer house doublewides.

Doug S said that he has observed that it can be very frustrating for members of the RAC because the amount of money allocated for Title II is so small compared to the need. Kathy said that the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest represents 350,000 acres of the most heavily used forest in the region and it is of concern to forestry in the county. She added that harvests in that forest are less than ten percent of what they used to be so the Forest Service has no revenue to manage the land. Lee said that knotweed spread is a forestry concern. Doug M. said RFC should let county know if this is important to forestry. Len said that all the things we have talked about are curative, not preventative. He said King County is suffering from unintended consequences of high dumping fees.

The commission did not take action regarding Title II and Title III allocations, having already written letter in support of federal reauthorization of the Act.

Stewardship Plan Standards Discussion

Alex Kamola, RFC and RFC members

The discussion was tabled.

Fireworks in Forests Issues

Linda Vane, Staff Liaison for the Rural Forest Commission

Linda said that Ole Una, who could not be here today, brought up this topic at the last meeting. Ole lives in the Forest Production District and is the owner of forest property. In the last several years he has observed people setting off large fireworks in the forest around the time of the 4th of July holiday and is concerned about the potential for wildfire. According to Ole, area residents have not complied with the Fire Marshall's requests to refrain from using fireworks in the forest. Linda handed out information on state and county rules and a new fireworks ordinance proposed by King County Councilmember Jane Hague. Linda said that the state prohibits fireworks

without a permit in forested areas between April 15 and December 1 [RCW 70.77.495]. The State Patrol, local fire departments and law enforcement agencies are responsible for enforcing the state law. Existing King County code does not say anything about fireworks in the forest. Linda said that Councilmember Hague has proposed a new ordinance that would allow citizens in a fire district to petition the County Council to ban all fireworks in their fire district [<http://www.metrokc.gov/council/members/hague/issues/fireworks/index.htm>]. There will be a public meeting on September 21, 2007.

Alex said that it seems that when someone does something illegal in the woods on the 4th of July, existing state law is not enforced. Doug M. suggested that the RFC look to the upcoming public meeting for an indication of citizens of the county feel about the issue. He added that there are existing rules with no capacity to enforce unless the citizens say it is important to change behavior in the woods. Len said that a general prohibition by fire district would encourage conflict between neighbors and that it is already hard to enforce the state law. Doug S. suggested that the RFC look at the broader issues of fire in forests at a future meeting. Lee said there are already laws on the books and until the public consciousness of this as a real problem is greater, ordinances might be a partial solution at best. The RFC determined that they would take no action now, but may look at the broader issues of wildfire prevention and compliance with laws related to fireworks in the forest at another meeting.

November agenda – joint meeting with the Agriculture Commission proposed

Alex Kamola, RFC Chair

Linda said that the Agriculture Commission (AC) has invited the Rural Forest Commission to a joint meeting on November 9, 2007. The RFC said some months ago that they would like to have such a joint meeting. A discussion of common interests and agenda topics ensued. Doug S. said that the AC and the RFC have a common interest in preserving rural landscapes and both are trying to talk to County Council and the Executive. He said it would be useful to know how the AC is feeling about their ability to give good feedback to the County's decision making process, their successes and failures. If their experiences and messages are similar to those of the RFC, joint messaging may be a useful topic of discussion.

Alex asked Bill Eckel and Kathy Creahan for the county staff perspective. Kathy said that forestry and agriculture are frequently mentioned together as the traditional rural land uses that are under threat of being lost to development. Among the reasons for this are that there are geographic areas where agriculture is affected by development and loss of forests uphill. Some of the same tools, such as purchase of conservation easements, are used to preserve agriculture and forest lands. She continued, saying that there is a similar lack of understanding and public support for both industries and the benefits they provide in that they are sometimes seen as the "bad" land uses from an environmental perspective. The County has tried to let people know that these are good environmental land uses. In addition, King County uses some of the same staff support for technical assistance to small forest and agricultural land owners, said Kathy. The

County' goal is to encourage good stewardship on the part of each individual landowner in order to protect resources, but also to build support for that continued use.

Bill Eckel said that the disconnect between the rural and the urban is something that continues to plague both the agricultural and forest resource areas. He said that agriculture seems to be making more of an inroad into bridging that gap than is forestry. For example, local agriculture is promoted by the County Fair and Puget Sound Fresh. Doug S. said to that the agricultural community has done a good job of marketing "locally grown" and that forestry could learn from them about how to market local wood products and manufacturing products for niche markets. Len added agricultural manufacturing includes freezing, canning and other kinds of processing and similarly, wood products involve more than sawmills. Kathy said if one looks at the County's *Rural Economic Strategy* one will see almost the same issues being raised: *i.e.*, the loss of infrastructure to support agriculture and forestry.

Alex asked Linda use these ideas to draft an agenda with the Agriculture Commission and circulate the draft to RFC members for input.

Suggestions for future agendas

1. Cascade Land Conservancy on the business development components of the Cascade Agenda.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Next meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting is November 9, 2006.

Staff Liaison:

Linda Vane, Forestry Program

206-296-8042 or linda.vane@metrokc.gov

Appendix A Rural Forest Commission Minutes – September 13, 2006



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Alex Kamola
Chair
Green River Forestry
Services, Inc.

August 8, 2006

Julie Stangell
Vice Chair
Hancock Timber
Resource Group

Julia Larson
Coordinator, Rural Economic Strategies
King County Office of Business Relations and Economic Development
701 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000
Seattle, WA 98104

Doug McClelland
Washington State
Department of Natural
Resources

Dear Ms. Larson:

Jean Bouffard
Rural Cities Representative

I am writing on behalf of the King County Rural Forest Commission (Commission) to comment on proposed changes in King County Code. The Commission encourages the King County Council (Council) to adopt the Business Relations and Economic Development Office's proposal to amend *Section 16.82.140 Class IV-G forest practices—six-year moratorium*, to allow forest thinning within aquatic areas, wetlands, steep slopes and wildlife areas when conducted in compliance with a state forest practice permit as part of a Conversion Option Harvest Plan. The Commission also encourages the Council to consider an additional code change: to reduce fees for staff work on forest practice-related permits in the Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) for practices that are no more than twenty acres in size and that are covered by an approved forest stewardship plan.

Jim Franzel
Mt. Baker/Snoqualmie
National Forest

Lee Witter Kahn
Forest Landowner

The Rural Forest Commission is an advisory body appointed by the King County Executive and Council to make recommendations on issues pertaining to forestland and forestry in the county. The Commission is comprised of representatives from the variety of constituencies involved with forestland in the county, including state agencies, industry, professional foresters, environmental organizations, and small and large private forest landowners.

Leonard Guss
Leonard Guss
Associates, Inc.

Alan "Ole" Una
Forest Landowner

The Commission supports the proposed code change that would allow more flexibility in forest thinning. Many small forest acreages in the county were created from former commercial timberlands where trees were planted very close together in anticipation of regular thinning. Left un-thinned, these over-stocked stands become prone to weather breakage, disease and insect damage. The proposed code change would allow landowners to remove lesser quality trees from over-stocked stands to improve growth and vigor of the remaining trees.

Dennis Dart
International
Forestry Consultants

Doug Schindler
Mountains to Sound
Greenway Trust

Julia Larson
August 8, 2006
Page 2

The Commission supports the proposed code change because properly conducted thinning across an entire property will result in a healthy, structurally sound forest that is less subject to wildfire. Wildfire is of increasing concern in the county as summer periods of drought become longer and more residences are built in forested areas.

The Commission also encourages the Council to consider an additional change in code. The Commission recommends that DDES reduce the hourly rate for staff work on forest practice-related permits to \$57.50 per hour up to a maximum of \$402.50 for practices no more than twenty acres in size, under a Conversion Option Harvest Plan or a Class 4-G non-conversion permit. To qualify for the reduced fee, the property must also be covered by a forest stewardship plan that has been approved by the Department of Natural Resources and Parks. This step will provide a predictable and reasonable fee structure for small scale practices that typically return very little revenue. The reduced fee is similar to the fee reduction already available for agricultural buildings and activities.

The Commission commends the County for having worked with affected landowners and communities to craft the proposed code change. Again, we strongly support the adoption of the proposed forestry code change that affects forest thinning. We also recommend that the Council consider a reduced fee for forest-related practices of small scale.

Thank you for considering the input of the Rural Forest Commission. Please do not hesitate to contact the Commission if we can be of additional assistance on this or other matters.

Sincerely,

Alexander Kamola, Chair
King County Rural Forest Commission

cc: Pam Bissonnette, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)
Mark Isaacson, Division Director, Water and Land Resources Division, DNRP
King County Rural Forest Commission Members